Reuse Of Abandoned Gas Station Sites

INFORMATION SHEET

Gas stations, dotting America's cities and landscape, provide an invaluable product - gasoline - to power the millions of cars, motorcycles, boats, and other vehicles in our country. But old, abandoned gas stations can be eyesores and blight communities. Across America, local communities are grappling with what to do about polluted, abandoned gas stations and other petroleum-contaminated properties, commonly called petroleum brownfields. Many citizens and businesses shy away from these properties, fearful of possible lasting effects and the potential liability of environmental contamination.

EPA and many state and local leaders are committed to sustainable development and preserving green space by cleaning up and making available for reuse these petroleum brownfields, which are often located on corner lots and in other prime locations. Reusing abandoned gas stations helps preserve green space, reduce urban sprawl, and reduce the distance people have to travel, thus decreasing air pollution.

Conservatively, there are approximately 200,000 abandoned gas stations and other vacant sites with petroleum contamination that are littering our nation. Once cleaned up, these properties provide an enormous opportunity to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods all across America.

To address this problem, EPA in 2000 and 2001, awarded USTfields pilot grants of up to $100,000 each to 50 states and tribes - totaling almost $5 million - to assess and cleanup petroleum brownfields. These grants are spurring partnerships among state and local governments, community groups, and investors and developers to get sites cleaned up and ready for community use, thereby eliminating the liability to communities and the continuing threat to public health and the environment. The USTfields initiative was an important building block which has spawned additional partnerships to reuse abandoned gas stations.

The 2002 Brownfields law authorizes EPA to give grant money to states and communities so they can inventory, assess, and clean up petroleum-contaminated brownfields. The money, which is earmarked for low-risk petroleum sites, complements the USTfields initiative. In 2003, EPA

provided almost $23 million to states and local governments to assist them in assessing, cleaning up, and reusing petroleum brownfields. EPA will award new grants in 2004.

EPA has joined forces with states, local communities, and the private sector to reap the benefits of cleaning up abandoned gas stations and, in their place, create new homes, new businesses, new parks, and wetlands, community centers and public health clinics. The following examples illustrate what's been accomplished already and represent the possibilities for future reuse.

New Homes

- Oakland, California - Fruitvale Avenue. Through a partnership with Habitat for Humanity, the city of Oakland, and EPA, a former gas station with four buried tanks was cleaned up. Now four new "green" homes, which were built using environmentally sustainable design and building practices, provide housing for low income families.

- Arlington, Virginia - Clarendon Triangle. Through a public and private partnership, a 1.4 acre petroleum-contaminated site was cleaned up and redeveloped. Today there is a new, mixed-use apartment building with over 250 units at this convenient, urban location.

New Businesses

- Nashua, New Hampshire - Whitney Screw. New England's largest bicycle dealer, Goodale's Bike Shop, is located on a former petroleum-contaminated industrial site. This successful reuse is the result of federal, state, and local partners working together to improve the aesthetic value of the local landscape through adaptive reuse of an existing building.

- Milwaukee, Wisconsin - Sherman Perk Coffee Shop. Built in 1939 and operated for two generations as a gas station, this site was vacant for almost a decade. Because of its historical significance, the building was restored; it now houses the Sherman Perk Coffee Shop in one of Milwaukee's most culturally and religiously diverse neighborhoods.

New Parks And Wetlands

- Chicago, Illinois - Abandoned Service Station Management Program. Four unmarketable surplus properties, which formerly housed gas stations, have been cleaned up and made ready for reuse. One site was converted into a small park using native plantings. This park is enhancing the neighborhood and is open to the public for their use and enjoyment.

- Pendleton, Oregon - Brownfield Park. This site was a service station and car dealership garage from the 1920s to the 1980s. After it was donated to the city of Pendleton, the site was transformed into a park and gateway to its Riverwalk, which is a pedestrian pathway along the Umatilla River that travels the length of Pendleton.

New Community Centers

- Trenton, New Jersey - West Ward Firehouse. An abandoned property that previously housed an office to a local newspaper, a pizzeria, and a gas station has been cleaned up. The city built a new fire station on this reclaimed, 1.5 acre site.

- Clearwater, Florida - Greenwood Community Health Resource Center. This former gas station site in North Greenwood contained abandoned underground storage tanks and contaminated soil. Now there is a community health clinic - where physicians, dentists, and pharmacists contribute their services and offer community-based health care - on this site, serving one of the city's most disadvantaged areas.

Ultimately, reusing petroleum brownfields protects the environment, preserves green spaces for future generations, improves the quality of life in neighborhoods, and promotes economic development. These types of reuse represent a demonstrated reinvestment in America.

Need More Information?

Contact Steven McNeely (703-603-7164, *mcneely.steven@epa.gov*) of EPA's Office of Underground Storage Tanks.

United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Office of Solid Waste And
Emergency Response
5401G

EPA-510-F-04-001
February 2004
www.epa.gov/oust/rags/pb.pdf